



WESLEY'S USE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

TED A. CAMPBELL

INTRODUCTION

We have come together to consider the topic of "Sanctification in the Benedictine and Methodist Traditions." I would like to begin these comments by reflecting for a moment on the word "tradition." We might define "tradition" as the process by which communities selectively and critically connect themselves to their past. It is a value-laden term, denoting not all of the past, but the past which we value and select and which we choose to "hand on" (*tradere*) to new generations.

Benedict of Nursia begins his Rule for Monte Cassino with an act of "traditioning." He discusses in the first chapter of the rule the four different types of monks that had evolved up to his time, and he is perfectly clear about his *evaluation* of these different types. The anchorites seem to be acceptable to Benedict, who himself had lived as a hermit for some years, and who would encourage members of his communities to live as hermits, at least for limited periods. He then discusses the "Sarabaites," that is, monks living according to the ancient Palestinian pattern in *lavras* by twos or threes. These, says Benedict, are "the worst kind" of monks, since they have no "shepherd" (abbot) and they do whatever they please. Then there are those that Benedict calls "the gyrary" monks, apparently meaning itinerant ascetics, perhaps carrying on the more exotic Syrian

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traditions of monasticism. Benedict's evaluation of these is one of sharp and unbounded criticism. "It is," he says, "better to be silent about their wretched lifestyle than to speak. Casting these aside," he continues, "let us with God's help establish a rule for Cenobites, who are the best kind of monks."¹ This, I say, is an "act of traditioning" (*actus tradendi*), an act in which Benedict selectively and critically connects his followers to the past of monasticism, opening a new way for the future.

It is my hope in the following comments to engage in a similar "act of traditioning," an act by which we today may selectively and critically connect our present with our past and our future. It is, admittedly, a complex undertaking, since there are few straightforward paths from Benedict to John Wesley and from thence to present-day Methodists. Twelve centuries lay between them, centuries which included the Reformation and the break with Catholic communion brought about in the English Reformation. The path to connecting our pasts that I shall pursue here is a path marked out by Wesley's own "act of traditioning" in appropriating the resources of ancient Christian asceticism for the Methodist people in their quest of "Christian holiness."² Moreover, I shall pursue this path in a cultural context that might be described as "postmodern," that is, a cultural context that has emerged since the 1970s which values tradition as a way for asserting contemporary identity.

THE POSTMODERN QUEST FOR WESLEY'S ANCIENT CHRISTIAN SOURCES

I begin with the present, by considering the rather large enterprise that has grown up in the last thirty years, and especially in the last ten years on the part of Wesleyan or Methodist Christians to find Wesley's ancient roots. The investigation of John Wesley's ancient sources itself reflects the postmodern cultural context. Up until the end of the 1970s, there was very little written on the subject, but since that time a remarkable coterie of women and men around the world have taken up this issue, and the enterprise of locating Wesley's ancient Christian roots reflects Methodism's own quest for self-identity in the 1980s and beyond.

It was Albert C. Outler, professor of historical theology at Southern Methodist University and a leading Methodist ecumenist, who suggested in 1964 in a provocative paragraph and a lengthy footnote attached to it that John Wesley's doctrine of sanctification might have roots in the work of Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian writers of the fourth century by way of the so-called "Macarian" homilies.³ Outler himself later made the shift from "modern" to "postmodern" culture quite explicitly,⁴ and I am convinced that his embracing the postmodern outlook lay in the background of his rather sad estrangement from his erstwhile ally, Dean Joseph Quillian of S.M.U., who remained to the very end a staunch advocate of old-style Liberalism. In any case, Outler's comment about Wesley and Gregory of Nyssa was followed up in the late 1960s by Robert Sheffield Brightman, then a doctoral student at Boston University, who wrote an ecumenically inspired imaginary dialogue between Wesley and Gregory of Nyssa. Brightman himself was convinced that Outler's argument about direct influence of the Cappadocians via the Macarian literature was mistaken.⁵

In the 1980s the quest for ancient Christianity in Wesley became something of a passion throughout the Wesleyan world. Kelley Steve McCormick, an elder of the

Church of the Nazarene, offered a 1983 Drew dissertation on "John Wesley's Use of John Chrysostom on the Christian Life."⁶ I was myself part of this quest, offering an S.M.U. dissertation (with Outler as an *amicus curiae* to the dissertation committee) in 1984 on Wesley's vision of ancient Christianity.⁷ In the next year, a dissertation was presented at St. Louis University on "John Wesley and the Church Fathers" by Arthur C. Meyers, a professor of economics at that (Jesuit) University, whose exposure to Catholic Christianity there prompted him to investigate his own Methodist tradition's Catholic roots. At about the same time in Sweden, a scholar named Bengt Haglund began work on a dissertation in this area as early as 1981; but Haglund died tragically in 1987 without finishing his research. Throughout this period, Professor Roberta Bondi of Emory University had taught a course in Wesley's patristic roots, and published at least two articles reflecting this interest.⁸ Moreover, a student of Professor Bondi's, Dr. Hoo-Jung Lee (now at the Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul) offered a dissertation at Emory in 1991 on "The Doctrine of New Creation in the Theology of John Wesley," including a chapter on Wesley's appropriation of ancient Eastern Christian literature.⁹

In addition to these individual works, at least two scholarly conferences have addressed the issue of the ancient or Eastern roots of John Wesley's theology. The Wesley Studies Working Group of the 1982 Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, including Outler, Bondi, Haglund, and myself, heard a paper from Professor Bondi on this topic, and included in its published recommendations the suggestion that this research should be pursued further.¹⁰ Eight years later, the 1990 annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society (meeting at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.) focused on the theme of "Wesleyanism and Eastern Orthodoxy," and heard a number of papers on these themes.¹¹ I would call attention to the fact that the Wesleyan Theological Society is a conservative evangelical body, representing the Holiness tradition of North American Wesleyanism, and it is, I think, quite significant that this group would have taken up (with great enthusiasm) the question of Wesley's roots in ancient Christianity.

Throughout the decade of the 1980s, then, the subject of John Wesley's knowledge and uses of ancient sources became a consistent thematic enterprise in Wesleyan studies. Coming from North America, Sweden, and Korea, from men and women, from older and younger scholars, from Conservative Evangelicals and scholars of Methodism's liberal traditions, it represents at least an impressive coincidence of interests. It represents, I believe, Methodism's recovering sense of self-identity as a Christian tradition with deep roots, and provides a point of contact for our attempts to bridge the Benedictine and Methodist traditions.

WESLEY'S ANCIENT CHRISTIAN SOURCES

What, then, were the ancient sources on which John Wesley relied, and which piqued the interest of so many Methodist investigators in the last decade? There were at least two occasions in which John Wesley himself laid out in a kind of schematic form his understanding of these deep roots. One comes in his sermon "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, near the City Road, London" (1777). After asserting

that Methodism is nothing less than the religion of the Bible, Wesley then claimed continuity between the Bible and the early church in the following "act of traditioning":

This is the religion of the primitive Church, of the whole Church in the purest ages. It is clearly expressed, even in the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp; it is seen more at large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian; and, even in the fourth century, it was found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macarius.¹²

This passage is particularly revealing of Wesley's conception of ancient Christianity. Century divisions are clearly laid out, with the Apostolic Fathers (here, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna) representing the second century, the quartet of Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyprian (all Africans!) representing the third century, and "even" (note the surprise on Wesley's part) in the fourth century John Chrysostom, Basil (the Great, Bishop of Caesarea), Ephraem Syrus and Macarius "the Egyptian." Wesley's *evaluative* traditioning is clearly present here. With the exception of Clement of Rome and the third-century quartet of Africans, the entire list is composed of Christians from the eastern Mediterranean. Conspicuously absent from this list are Latin writers Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose, although the first two of these do show up in a more general list of authors, Wesley recommended for clergy to read.¹³

These lists offer a fairly good indication of the ancient Christian texts to which Wesley had access, and this can be substantiated by examining the sources to which Wesley frequently referred in his various writings.¹⁴ In the first place, Wesley had frequent reference to the writings of the "Apostolic Fathers," the collection of Christian writers from the early second century which includes Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and a letter of Polycarp of Smyrna to Ignatius. John Wesley not only edited, but produced his own translation of the works of the Apostolic Fathers, published in 1749 in the first volume of his *Christian Library*.¹⁵ The Apostolic Fathers were of particular interest to Wesley, because some eighteenth-century critics of traditional religious belief—Dr. Conyers Middleton in particular—argued that the age of miracles had ceased with the Apostles and that miraculous powers were not exercised in the Christian Church from the time of the Apostolic Fathers. Wesley had just finished his translation of the Apostolic Fathers when this argument emerged, and he wrote a lengthy defense of "miraculous powers" in the early Church based especially on his reading in the Apostolic Fathers.¹⁶

As the list quoted above indicates, Wesley's preference in third-century authors was for Africans, two from the Alexandrian tradition that had attempted to unite Hellenistic philosophy and Christian faith (Clement of Alexandria and Origen), and two from Roman North Africa (Tertullian and Cyprian, both of Carthage). When we turn to Wesley's preferences and selected readings in fourth-century writers, though, his particular predilection for ancient ascetic Christianity becomes apparent. We should note at this point that Wesley's view of the fourth century was colored by his consistent belief that the Church had fallen from its original purity with Constantine's conversion to Christianity. "Constantine's calling himself a Christian," John Wesley

wrote, "was productive of more evil to the Church than all the ten persecutions put together."¹⁷ Recalling the quotation above that true Christianity was expressed "even in the fourth century" in certain authors, we can recognize Wesley's sense that the Church at large had failed its Christian mission in this century and the true faith remained only in certain circles of fourth-century Christians.

But just what were these certain circles of fourth-century Christians amongst whom, Wesley thought, the true faith had persisted beyond Constantine? The list above mentions John Chrysostom, Basil the Great (one of the Cappadocians), Ephraem Syrus, and "Macarius." What should be noted about this group is that all of them were monks. Monasticism as we know it had originated roughly simultaneously with Constantine's conversion, and spread rapidly from the Egyptian deserts around the Eastern rim of the Mediterranean, with particular monastic traditions developing in Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor. Thus, although Wesley never says it quite like this, the fact is that the pockets of pure Christianity he recognized in the fourth century were exclusively those circles of Christian monks whose asceticism marked a reaction against the Constantinian alliance of Roman culture and Christianity.¹⁸

The *Spiritual Homilies* attributed to "Macarius the Egyptian" deserve special notice, for although Wesley read and quoted Chrysostom, Basil, Ephraem Syrus, and other ancient authors, he actually published an edition of the *Macarian Homilies*, which followed the translation of the *Apostolic Fathers* in the first volume of his *Christian Library*.¹⁹ Outler's thesis concerning the influence of Gregory of Nyssa on John Wesley relied on a theory (of Werner Jaeger) that the "*Spiritual Homilies*" were a redaction of Nyssa's work. This theory has been generally rejected, both with respect to the Macarian literature and then further with respect to its influence on John Wesley. It is at this point that Professor Hoo-jung Lee makes an important contribution, arguing that the Macarian homilies in themselves (and not as a reflection of Cappadocian theology) should be seen as a significant source of John Wesley's doctrine of holiness and sanctification.²⁰

It is instructive, especially in light of Methodist-Benedictine conversations in this conference, to consider Wesley's thoughts on Augustine of Hippo, the near-contemporary of the Cappadocians whose thought was so influential on Western theology in the Middle Ages and in the Reformation. Although Wesley could quote Augustine positively, and in fact did quote Augustine more than any other ancient author, he could also heap caustic criticism on the Bishop of Hippo Regius. "[A] wonderful saint!" Wesley wrote of Augustine on one occasion, "As full of pride, passion, bitterness, censoriousness, and as foul-mouthed to all that contradicted him as George Fox himself."²¹ Wesley was convinced, for example, that Augustine's furious response to Pelagius had mistaken Pelagius's laudable insistence on the necessity of good works with the false notion that good works could win human beings salvation.²² This is especially interesting, considering that Pelagius (probably) and the "Semipelagians" (certainly), such as Vincent of Lerins and John Cassian, represented the traditions of ancient asceticism, in which a stress on good works in sanctification was prominent.

Ancient ascetic Christianity, then, played a critical role in John Wesley's conception of the Christian vision. It suggested the possibility that long after the age of the apostles, and even after the disastrous effects of "Constantine's calling himself a Christian,"

true Christianity could persevere in history. Wesley saw the spirituality of asceticism, especially earlier Eastern asceticism, as reflecting faithfully the Gospel challenge to be conformed to the image of Christ, and he saw ancient ascetic Christianity as reflecting more faithfully the Gospel's mandate that good works ought to accompany true Christian faith.

ANCIENT ASCETICISM AND WESLEY'S CONCERN FOR SANCTIFICATION

The preceding comments have offered a sketch of how John Wesley thought of ancient Christianity, showing the prominence of ancient ascetic Christianity in his vision. It is also important to consider, I believe, how Wesley actually *utilized* or *employed* these notions of ancient ascetic Christianity in his work of reform in the eighteenth-century British church and in particular in his advocacy of sanctification.

We should be aware of the fact that John Wesley was not the first European in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to call upon ancient ascetic sources for understanding the process of sanctification. This had been a particular preoccupation of Anglican moralists in the late seventeenth century. Most prominently, Wesley had studied and later produced an edition of William Cave's *Primitive Christianity: Or the Religion of the Ancient Christians*, which had been published in 1672. Cave's book was divided in such a way as to show the false charges brought against ancient Christians (Part I), the private virtues of the ancient Christians (Part II) and the public virtues of the ancient Christians (Part III).²³ Wesley had also read Cave's massive volumes entitled *Apostolici* (the lives of Christians prior to Constantine) and *Ecclesiastici* (on the lives of Christians after the time of Constantine), both of which paint laudatory portraits of the holiness of the early Christians. He was aware of a large body of Anglican literature that pointed to the model of the ancient church as a model for the reform of Anglicanism. One example of this literature would be Nathaniel Marshall's *The Penitential Discipline of the Ancient Church*, a proposal to the Anglican Convocation for reintroducing public confession into the Church of England.²⁴

In addition to Anglicans, Wesley was aware of and published editions of works of European Pietists who had called upon ancient Christianity as a model for contemporary holiness. Johann Arndt, whose works in the early 1600s lay in the background of Lutheran Pietism, was said to have memorized the fifty spiritual homilies attributed to "St. Macarius the Egyptian," and reflected the influence of these ancient mystical homilies throughout his four-volume work on *True Christianity*. This work, in turn, was read widely by Lutherans throughout the seventeenth century, and in this way it came to influence the Pietistic movement.²⁵ Philip Jakob Spener's treatise entitled *Pia Desideria*, one of the first Pietist manifestos and originally an introduction to one of Arndt's works, has a section describing our "hope for better conditions in the Church," and one of Spener's points was that the extraordinary holiness of the ancient Church gives us grounds to hope that even in later generations such holiness might be realized in the life of the Church.²⁶

In addition to Anglicans and Pietists who had called on ancient Christian literature, Wesley was also aware of a strain of Catholic literature (largely Gaillican) that had also held up the vision of ancient Christianity as a model for Christian holiness in the pre-

sent time. For example, he had read as early as his days in Georgia Claude Fleury's *Moeurs des Chrétiens* the "Manners of the Ancient Christians" (1682), and Wesley eventually published his own edition of this work. Moreover, Wesley knew of a little treatise on "the Heavenly Lives of the Primitive Christians," attached to Anthony Horneck's work *The Happy Ascetic*. This work was based on a letter (1660) from Jean Fronteau, chancellor of the University of Paris, to Francis de Harlay-Chanvallon, Archbishop of Rouen.²⁷ Wesley would publish editions of both of these works, and in them he again found "pre-packaged" literature on ancient Christianity that linked the vision of holiness in the ancient church to the contemporary attempt at Christian renewal.

What, then, did Wesley find in ancient ascetic Christianity that he valued and passed along ("traditioned") to the Methodist people? This is a question that I have tried to avoid for a decade now. Albert Outler had pressed me to demonstrate, in my 1984 S.M.U. dissertation, that Wesley's understanding of sanctification was one drawn principally from ancient Eastern Christian ascetic sources. I resisted this grace, arguing that it is virtually impossible to weigh the relative strength of the influence of various sources over twelve hundred years of history. But even if we cannot weigh these influences, the question still remains as to what Wesley valued and selected, concerning the pursuit of sanctification, in these ancient ascetic sources. I now attempt to answer this question directly by suggesting five particular legacies of ancient monasticism that Wesley valued.

1. In the very first place, I would stress that Wesley's interest in ancient asceticism was not only in the theology that he found in the those ages, but more importantly in *the actual holiness he perceived in the ancient monks*. This can be easily seen by considering his comments on ancient Christian saints. He refers to Ephraem Syrus ("St. Ephraem Syrus," for Wesley) as "the man of a broken heart," i.e., one who reflected consistently the virtue of humility of spirit.²⁸ Similarly, Wesley's edition of the Macarian homilies in his *Christian Library* has the following prefatory remarks (actually taken over from the English translation of Macarius to which Wesley had access):

What [Macarius] continually labours to cultivate in himself and others is, the real life of God in the heart and soul, that kingdom of God, which consists in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.... He seems indeed never to be easy, but either in the height, or breadth, or length of divine love, or at least in the depths of humility.²⁹

Similar references are plentiful. The point I wish to make here is that Wesley not only valued the *theology* of ancient ascetic Christianity (this is the point most frequently made in academic circles): more importantly, he saw ancient asceticism (in this case represented by "Macarius" and Ephraem Syrus) as *actually living out a life of Christ-like holiness*, both as individual spiritual guides and as "primitive" Christian communities. The vision of the ancient ascetics, then, was part of John Wesley's comprehensive act of *envisioning* how the church *might* be, how it indeed *should* be, even in eighteenth-century Britain. In this respect, the vision of ancient ascetic Christianity was pitted against the lack of spirituality and holiness in Wesley's own culture, and specifically in

his own Church. I want to stress this point, because most of the research on Wesley and ancient Christianity to date has tended to stress *theological* or *doctrinal* connections. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature with which Wesley was familiar, and his own use of this material, suggests that in the first place it was the *moral* or *spiritual* model that he found in ancient Christianity that he primarily valued: not just their *doctrine of sanctification* but rather *their actual holiness*.

2. In the second place, then, I would stress the similarities between Wesley's doctrine of sanctification and that of ancient Christian asceticism. In particular, *Wesley's understanding of the religious life as the quest to restore the lost image of God*, a version of *theiosis*, has direct precedents in the ancient monastic writings to which Wesley appealed. The Robert Sheffield Brightman dissertation on John Wesley and Gregory of Nyssa stresses the similarities between the understanding of holiness shared by Wesley and Nyssa: both insisted that the goal of humankind is the restoration of the divine image, lost since the fall.³⁰ At this point Professor Hoo-Jung Lee has made another important point. Professor Lee shows that Wesley's vision of the restoration of the divine image is linked to Wesley's overall vision of the goal of all creation, namely, the restoration of the whole of creation to the reign of God that is implied in the Macarian literature and made even more explicit in Ephraem Syrus.³¹

It is important to remember, as I have stated above, that there were also prominent Catholic and Anglican precedents for Wesley's stress on sanctification and holiness in addition to these ancient Eastern Christian sources. Perhaps most notably would be the Anglican devotional literature that had been written in the seventeenth century, and to which Susanna Wesley referred as "practical divinity." Given the importance of Catholic and Anglican and even Puritan literature in Wesley's comprehensive vision of Christian life, it may *not* be the case that ancient ascetic Christianity was the *primary* source of Wesley's view of sanctification (as Outler implied on a number of occasions). But nevertheless, Wesley found ancient monastic understandings of sanctification generally consistent with his stress on the necessity of holiness and good works following conversion. This became particularly crucial in Wesley's polemic against "antinomianism" in the Revival, and I suspect that Wesley's publication of the Macarian homilies along with Anglican, Puritan, and Catholic devotional literature in his *Christian Library* was both to illustrate holiness itself (the previous point) and also to suggest to his doctrinal detractors that the insistence on holiness and good works was a consistent mark of the purest traditions of the Church, East and West.

3. In the third place, I would argue that Wesley's understanding of *religious communion and communal discipline* was grounded in ancient Christian ascetic practice, although this too was "traditioned" or handed on to Wesley by European Pietism, Puritanism, and by the "Religious Societies" movement in Britain. Wesley's "General Rules" of the United Societies functioned as terms of communion for early Methodists. Again, they were not doctrinal terms of communion but moral ones. My colleague David Lowes Watson has shown that the attempt to live by the covenant supplied by the General Rules was the primary activity of early Methodist class meetings, which may have appeared more like a "twelve-step" meeting than like a contemporary Christian prayer-meeting.³² Moreover, Wesley made it clear that he saw the

Methodist institutions of classes, societies, and even their practice of determining "communion" at the Love Feast by the use of "class tickets" as grounded in the eucharistic discipline of the ancient church.³³

Now one might define monasticism as a form of Christian life which establishes distinctive criteria for communion in addition to or beyond the criteria for communion established by the church at large. That is to say, monasticism develops a religious community with particular standards for its own adherents, such as traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and these particular criteria are not required of Christians in the church at large. The monastic community admits members to its particular community, and can also practice a form of "excommunication" which does not imply excommunication from the church at large.

It is in this particular sense that early Methodism could be described as a "monastic" movement. Its members did not take traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, although voluntary celibacy and poverty (and obedience to the Conference) were in fact prominent features of the lives of early Methodist preachers. Most importantly, the system of Methodist "classes" and "societies" and "bands" did in fact establish criteria for community beyond those of Anglicanism at large, and even established grounds for a kind of Methodist "excommunication" that did not imply excommunication from Anglicanism. As a "society" within the Church of England, Methodism functioned parallel to the way in which religious orders had functioned in Catholicism, and one of the most intriguing contemporary proposals for Methodist identity is that Methodists should align themselves globally not as a church or denomination, but rather as a kind of "religious order" whose distinctive membership cuts across the boundaries of existing ecclesial communions or new ecumenical unions.³⁴

4. In the fourth place, Wesley's *use of therapeutic imagery, and especially his attempt to catalog spiritual "illnesses,"* had clear precedents in ancient ascetic literature. Wesley considered himself to be something of a scientist of the religious life: constantly jotting down notes about his own and other peoples' spiritual experiences, "searching the scriptures" for their light on spiritual experience, and writing up his sermons, many of which stand as generalized treatises on specific aspects of the religious life. Among these Sermons, a number deal with specific spiritual problems faced by seekers and believers: "Heaviness through Manifold Temptations," "Wandering Thoughts," "The Wilderness State," and the like. Wesley developed something like a scientific taxonomy of spiritual problems, and wanted his Methodist leaders to be able to diagnose them and prescribe their various cures.

In this enterprise, Wesley found ancient ascetic writers to be especially helpful. In his sermon on "The Scripture Way of Salvation," he cites a passage from the Macarian Homilies to illustrate the problem of believers who have been lulled into a (false) sense that they no longer have inward sin.³⁵ Similarly, Wesley cites a long story from Ephraem Syrus in his Journal illustrating the need for the repentance of believers.³⁶ In these ways, the ancient monastic writers were valued for their long experience in spiritual matters, especially their ability to identify the consistent problems that believers faced.

5. Finally, and in the fifth place, Wesley's *vision of the goal of sanctification, Christian*

perfection, seems to have clear precedents in ancient ascetic literature, though again there was a long process of traditioning in which Catholic, Anglican, and some Protestant sources played their parts. John Wesley consistently taught that the process of sanctification is culminated in "entire sanctification" or "Christian perfection," which he understood to mean the goal (*telos*) of loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. Wesley's early poem "on Clemens Alexandrinus's Description of a Perfect Christian" calls upon Clement's description of the goal of Christian perfection. It begins with the stanza:

*Here from afar the finish'd Height
Of Holiness is seen:
But O what heavy tracts of Toil,
What Deserts lie between.*³⁷

Wesley later stated that his treatise on "The Character of a Methodist" was also based on the description of a perfect Christian in Clement's *Stromateis*.³⁸

It is likely that the reason why Wesley was attracted to the *Spiritual Homilies* attributed to "Macarius of Egypt" was because of the stress that the Homilies laid on the goal of Christian perfection. Indeed, these Homilies, as other ancient ascetic literature, regarded the goal of humankind as "deification" (*theiosis* or *apotheosis*); but it is important to note that Wesley eliminated this controversial term from his edition of the Homilies, replacing it typically with "sanctification."³⁹ The Homilies speak of a "Sanctification of the Spirit" which can be termed "an Entire Redemption from Sin,"⁴⁰ or "the Baptism of Fire and of the Holy Ghost."⁴¹ Similarly, those who attain to spiritual perfection are described in the Homilies as "baptized into the Holy Spirit."⁴² The Christian's quest for holiness and perfection is a persistent theme in the Macarian Homilies which shines through Wesley's edition of them.⁴³ Wesley saw "Macarius," then, as a fourth-century advocate of the quest for perfection Wesley believed to have characterized the church as a whole in its purer ages.

CONCLUSION: ANCIENT ROOTS, METHODIST ROOTS AND THE CONTEMPORARY ECUMENICAL QUEST FOR CHRISTIAN HOLINESS

I have tried to suggest in the foregoing paragraphs that the traditions of ancient Christian asceticism provide a common tradition for both Benedictine and Methodist understandings of sanctification. From the monks of the ancient church to Benedict of Nursia these traditions came by way of the Western monastic traditions of John Cassian, strongly influenced by the theology and spirituality of Augustine of Hippo. For John Wesley, the inheritance of ancient Christian monasticism came through a variety of sources, especially by way of Anglican and Gallican theologians and spiritual writers who found in Christian antiquity a vision or pattern for the renewal of the church in their own times. There were other paths by which the inheritance of ancient monasticism came to Wesley, perhaps most notably in the fact that the *Book of Common Prayer* had taken up the Benedictine tradition of *lectio continua*.

Beyond the historical linkages between our traditions, this conference must also

address the ways in which Benedictine and Methodist traditions about sanctification have diverged from each other. As an Evangelical Methodist, I am inclined to stress that Methodists and Evangelicals more broadly have developed their own distinctive spiritual traditions, embracing theological understandings of the "way of salvation," "moments" in Christian experience such as "awakening," repentance, conversion, and possibly subsequent experiences, even their own "institutions" for spiritual development, such as revivals, camp meetings, testimonial gatherings, hymn sings, and the like. It will be important in this gathering to consider not only our common roots, but also the distinctive gifts that our traditions have developed on their own over the centuries past.

But let not our distinctive developments hinder our sense of common roots in Christian history and experience. Those of us who work in clergy education in North America have seen a considerable revival of interest in traditional forms of spirituality in the last decades. One of the most interesting developments has been the rise of interest on the part of Evangelical Christians in monastic and ascetic spirituality. This is, I believe, a peculiarly Evangelical response to the postmodern cultural condition in which the search for deeper roots or traditions has become so prominent. The time is ripe, I think, for such a meeting as this to consider our common heritage, our distinctive gifts, and the challenge that we may together lay before the world today the challenge to be conformed to the image of Christ.

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NOTES

1. "The Rule of St. Benedict," chapter 1 (in Anthony C. Meisel and M. L. del Mastro, trans. and eds., *The Rule of Saint Benedict* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image Books, 1975], p. 47).
2. I should note at this point that although the title "Wesley's Use of the Church Fathers" was suggested for this paper, the term "Church Fathers" itself implies a way of traditioning with which I am uncomfortable, since it seems to favor male writers of antiquity. I shall prefer the expressions "ancient Christian writers," etc. to "Church Fathers" in the text following.
3. Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 9-10, and especially the lengthy footnote on p. 9.
4. Albert C. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies—An Agenda for 'Phase III,'" in M. Douglas Meeks, ed., *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), p. 38, where Outler asserts that "the rise and fall of 'Enlightenment Christianity' has brought us to a new postmodern era in which nineteenth-century liberalism seems less and less robust."
5. Robert Sheffield Brightman, "Gregory of Nyssa and John Wesley in Theological Dialogue on the Christian Life" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1969), pp. 45-58 and especially the appendix on pp. 359-367.
6. Kelley Steve McCormick, "John Wesley's Use of John Chrysostom on the Christian Life" (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1983).
7. Ted A. Campbell, "John Wesley's Conceptions and Uses of Christian Antiquity" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Methodist University, 1984); subsequently revised and published as *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press/Kingwood Books, 1991).
8. Roberta Bondi, "The Meeting of Oriental Orthodoxy and United Methodism," in Paul Fries and Tiran Nersoyan, eds., *Christ in East and West* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987), pp. 171-184 and "The Role of the Holy Spirit from a United Methodist Perspective," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 31:3-4 (1986): 351-360.
9. Hoo-Jung Lee, "The Doctrine of New Creation in the Theology of John Wesley" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1991), especially chapter five, pp. 154-245.
10. In Meeks, *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, p. 62.
11. The papers of the conference were published in *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26:1 (Spring 1991), and Randy Maddox's programmatic essay for the conference, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Divergences" along with an article by Howard Snyder on "John Wesley and Macarius the Egyptian" appeared in the *Asbury Theological Journal* 45:2 (Fall 1990), pp. 29-53 and 55-60, respectively.
12. Sermon "On Laying the Foundation..." etc., II:3, in Albert C. Outler, ed., *Sermons* 4 vols. *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1-4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-1987) 3:586. The other passage parallel to this one is in the "Address to the Clergy," I:2, in

Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 10:484.

13. In the "Address to the Clergy" 1:2 (Jackson, ed., *Works*, 10:484), and even here Wesley reserves his highest praise for the Eastern writer Ephraem Syrus.

14. These sources are tabulated in my dissertation (see reference above, "John Wesley's Conceptions and Uses of Christian Antiquity"), appendix 3, pp. 324-338 and in *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, appendix 2, pp. 125-134.

15. John Wesley, ed., *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been Published in the English Language* (50 vols.; Bristol: Felix Farley, 1749-1755), 1:3-78. My own comparison of Wesley's version and the earlier translation of (Archbishop) William Wake shows that Wesley began his work as a fresh translation, but as he progressed he relied more and more consistently on Wake's translation; William Wake, trans., *The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers* (London: Richard Sare, 1693).

16. "A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton" (1748/1749, in Jackson, ed., *Works* 10:1-79), cf. Ted A. Campbell, "John Wesley and Conyers Middleton on Divine Intervention in History" (*Church History*, 55:1 [March 1986]: 39-49).

17. Sermon "Of Former Times" pars. 15-16 (in Outler, ed., *Sermons*, 3:450).

18. Cf. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, pp. 50-51.

19. Wesley, *Christian Library*, 1:79-154.

20. Lee, "The Doctrine of New Creation," pp. 154-245.

21. Outler, *Sermons*, "The Wisdom of God's Counsels," par. 9, 2:556.

22. Ibid., and cf. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, pp. 62-65.

23. William Cave, *Primitive Christianity: or, the Religion of the Primitive Christians in the First Ages of the Gospel*, Henry Cary, ed. (London: Thomas Tegg, 1840).

24. Nathaniel Marshall, *The Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church for the First Four Hundred Years After Christ* (Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844).

25. Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 79-82.

26. Philip Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, Theodore G. Tappert, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 81-85.

27. Jean Fronteau, *Epistola ad... Franc. de Harlay... In qua de Moribus et Vita Christianorum in Primis Ecclesiae Saeculis Agitur* (Paris: C. Savreux, 1660); cf. Anthony Homeck, *The Happy Ascetic: or, the Best Exercise* (London: Henry Mortlock, fourth edition, 1699), pp. 553ff.

28. John Wesley, "Address to the Clergy," 1:2 (Jackson 10:484).

29. Preface to the Macarian homilies, par. 7 in Wesley's edition in the *Christian Library* 1:83. The passage is taken over from Thomas Haywood, ed. and trans., *Primitive Morality: or, The Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian* (London: W.W. Taylor, and J. Innys, and J. Osborn, 1721), p. 33.

30. Brightman, "Gregory of Nyssa and John Wesley in Theological Dialogue."

31. Lee, "The Doctrine of New Creation," pp. 205, 206-209, 215-216.

32. David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), pp. 107-108.

33. John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists" I-VIII (in Jackson, ed. *Works*, 8:248-261).

34. Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation," in Meeks, ed., *The Future of The Methodist Theological Traditions*, pp. 93-129.

35. Sermon on "The Scripture Way of Salvation" 1:7 (in Outler, ed., *Sermons*, 2:159).

36. In Jackson, *Works*, 3:56-59; and in W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds.,

Journals and Diaries (Bicentennial Edition of the *Works of John Wesley* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988]: 4:322-325), 21 May 1761.

37. "On Clemens Alexandrinus' Description of a Perfect Christian," 1 (*Hymns and Sacred Poems* [1739 edn.], p. 37; and in George Osborn, ed., *Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley* 13 vols. [London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1868]: 1:34).

38. John Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist," in Jackson, ed., *Works*, 8:339-347. Wesley's note that this was based on Clement of Alexandria is given in the *Journal* for 5 March 1767 (Jackson 3:273; Cumock 5:197).

39. Homily 26, *Primitive Morality*, p. 321; cf. *Christian Library*, 1:129.

40. Homily 10, *Primitive Morality*, p. 178; *Christian Library*, 1:107.

41. Homily 27, *Primitive Morality*, p. 353; *Christian Library*, 1:133.

42. Homily 43, *Primitive Morality* p. 431; *Christian Library*, 1:140. It is interesting that Wesley let this passage stand, since he himself did not use the language of Spirit baptism to describe (entire) sanctification (although John Fletcher did). The expression passed from Fletcher to Methodist Holiness circles, and thence to modern Pentecostalism. Cf. Laurence W. Wood, *Pentecostal Grace* (Wilmore, Ky.: Francis Asbury Press, 1980), pp. 198-239.

43. A tabulation of passages dealing with holiness and perfection included in Wesley's edition of the Macarian homilies is given in Campbell, "John Wesley's Conceptions and Uses of Christian Antiquity," appendix 4.